



DRUG LORDS PROFIT
FROM VACCINES

HOW BIG PHARMA IS CASHING IN >>PAGES 10&11



STARMER STEPS UP
WAR ON THE LEFT

SOCIALISTS MUST BREAK FROM
THE LABOUR PARTY >>PAGE 20

Socialist Worker

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● TORIES IMPOSE PAY FREEZE
● JOBS MASSACRE DEEPENS

START THE FIGHTBACK



Why we need unity to defeat government attacks >>Pages 4&5

COVID-19

Why Hull is at
the centre of the
coronavirus storm

HULL HAS become
the worst-hit city by
coronavirus in Britain.

It's also a place where
many people struggle to get
by. Nearly one in five people
there claim Universal Credit.

Socialist Worker spoke
to Hull residents about life
in a city where poverty and
pandemic collide.

>>Pages 2&3

RACISM



'I won't last'—
man threatened
with deportation

A JAMAICAN man who is
threatened with deportation
has said that his "life
would be in danger"
if he's sent back there
in two weeks' time.

John told Socialist
Worker, "If I go back there
I know what would happen
to me.

"I wouldn't last too long."
>>Page 6

GUATEMALA

Protesters have
'had it' with
government

ANGRY PROTESTERS took
to the streets in Guatemala in
Central America last week.

Around 10,000 people
demonstrated after the
government passed a budget
that favoured big business and
the rich but cut education and
health services.

>>Page 8

by SADIE ROBINSON

HULL HAS become the worst-hit city by coronavirus in Britain. The week to 13 November saw 761 confirmed cases per 100,000 people. The second highest-hit place was Hartlepool, with 597.

Stephen Brady, Hull's Labour council leader, said Hull faces a "health emergency". What does that mean for people living there?

Self-employed worker Tanya told Socialist Worker that the latest lockdown has "very much" affected her. "As a hair stylist I'm forced to close," she explained. "I am newly self-employed, which means I receive no government help at all.

"The government is asking for at least two years of self-assessment as proof of income. I don't yet even have one."

Brady wrote to Boris Johnson about the "absence of central government support". Workers and the most vulnerable have suffered as a result.

Seb runs the Vulcan Centre in Hull. It provides sports and community facilities—and is now "Hull's biggest food bank".

"I'm trying to remain upbeat, but it's bleak", Seb told Socialist Worker.

Unemployment

"We're a very poor area with high unemployment. A lot of people rely on public services and food banks. And if you tell someone who has schizophrenia or bi-polar that you'll be in touch by phone, that has a consequence.

"There's a massive fallout from nine months of people being left to their own devices.

"There's a cost to removing services, cutting funding and making people isolate in overcrowded housing. From being on the ground here, I would argue that cost is pretty high."

Russ, manager of Hull Foodbank, explained how the virus has made life worse for many people. "The foodbank helps people that generally just about get by," he told Socialist Worker. "So an unexpected delay in wages or benefits is enough to leave people struggling.

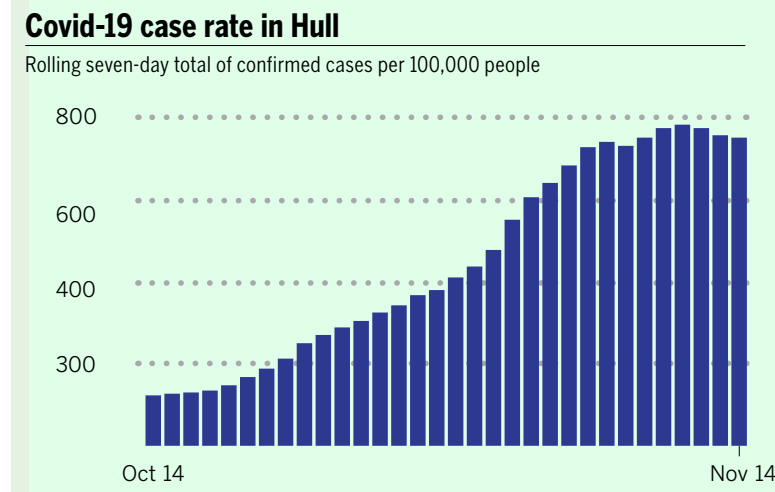
"The pandemic has compounded these issues and it's the poorest, most vulnerable that are hardest hit."

WHY HULL IS AT THE CENTRE OF COVID-19 STORM

● Britain's coronavirus hotspot also has one in five people claiming Universal Credit



NURSES AT the Hull Royal infirmary struggle to help the hundreds of patients who have Covid-19 (top) Poverty, poor housing and low pay have long plagued Hull (right)



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in Hull are now claiming Universal Credit (UC) after widespread job losses in the city.

Over 33,400 people in Hull are now claiming UC—nearly double the figure in March, when the first lockdown began. But the impact of the pandemic also goes beyond those immediately affected.

Contingency

Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust had drawn up plans to treat around 200-250 coronavirus patients. It now has a contingency plan to treat up to 800.

Retired teacher Wendy and her husband are in their 60s with underlying health conditions. She said the situation in hospitals is "a huge concern".

"The chief medical officer at one hospital said if things don't improve, they won't be able to provide emergency care," Wendy told Socialist Worker.

"That sends the impression that you could have a heart attack and there would not be the bed space or staff to help you.

"Hull is isolated geographically. Hospitals in Grimsby and Goole are under massive pressure. You can't just go to another hospital."

Children and young people have suffered disproportionately as the pandemic has spread out of control.

"It's hard for young people," said Seb. "I'm 41. I've done things with

my time, gone to university. But the younger generations are going to struggle to do the things we did.

"It's affected people at university and people trying to find employment. And it goes right down to young kids—how they learn to socialise. We don't want them to be a lost generation."

Seb added that there are problems in expecting young people to stay at home in difficult circumstances.

"Traditionally young people socialise, go to parties and school, see friends," he said.

"If they have big families in overcrowded accommodation it's unrealistic that they will spend all their time indoors.

"Some will be in households with domestic violence or substance issues. Maybe the reason Covid's at such a high rate in Hull is that people can't isolate."

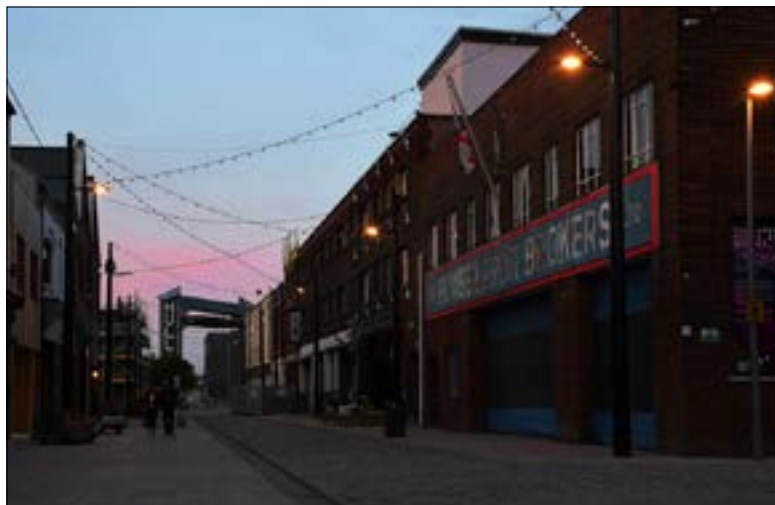
Impact

The impact on young people and disruption in schools has also piled more stress onto parents.

"My ten year old daughter is in her final year of primary school, the year of the dreaded Sats," said Tanya.

"Most of the year so far has been missed due to positive cases within the school. She's currently isolating as one case was one of her classmates. Most schools in this area have suffered full or partial closure.

"I'm home schooling. I feel as if



THE UPMARKET areas of the city that were supposed to herald regeneration are now empty

PICTURE: MICHAEL PINSKY/Flickr

I'm failing her. I feel that if she fails her Sats this year it will be my fault."

Instead of supporting children and parents at home, the Tories have argued that school should continue as normal. Meanwhile schools shut anyway.

"One in four children in Hull are not in school," explained Wendy. "The local NEU union rep said children of key workers are getting sent home chaotically.

"Schools are closing all around you."

One recent opinion poll in a local Hull paper found that 78 percent

'This isn't a lockdown. It's a mockdown'

THE TORIES insisted on only a limited "lockdown" so that profits could be protected.

But this leaves many people feeling like they aren't in a lockdown at all.

Wendy said one friend refers to it as a "mockdown". "A lot of non-essential shops are open," she said.

"B&M was even allowed to open what was described as a 'huge' brand new superstore right in the centre of town last Thursday. Special opening details were shared in the local paper."

Tanya agreed that things feel different this time around. "There don't seem to be half as many businesses closed as during the first lockdown," she said. "Pretty much everyone I know is still in work.

"Not as many people seem to be on the furlough scheme. It seems quite a lot of businesses have found a loophole in the system which qualifies them as essential.

"This in turn encourages the public to go about their daily routines as 'normal'."

Wendy said this, coupled with poverty, could help explain Hull's high coronavirus rate.

"There are a lot of small workplaces in Hull that are a bit under the radar," she explained. "A lot of people are on zero hours contracts. So there will be enormous pressure for people to keep going.

"I heard of a minimum wage worker who took six days off with symptoms, but was contacted by the employer to get back to work."

Violence

Seb said the virus "exacerbates problems already there".

"It's not that we've just discovered substance abuse or violence," he said. "But during the pandemic the services that were helping haven't been there so much.

"The effect is huge. I know people in rehab who couldn't get help. It's set back their recovery. We may be paying for this for quite some time."

Seb stressed the importance of services that can support people to recover.

"You have social workers, youth workers, social spaces and sports clubs for people's wellbeing," he said. "Those things aren't luxuries. They're vital for people's mental survival."

Russ agreed that the government could do much more to support people. "The government could help by continuing the £20 a week uplift

to Universal Credit brought in at the beginning of the pandemic," he said.

"They could suspend government deductions to benefit payments and introduce a fairer approach to repayments for things like Advance Payments. They could invest in local welfare assistance."

Tanya had felt the government was handling the pandemic "quite well" back in March.

"Boris was speaking every day, keeping us informed," she said. "Lockdown followed. Rishi Sunak spoke of helping out businesses and self-employed people, and it all seemed ok.

"But then we came out of lockdown and it was too relaxed. People assumed life was to be 'normal'. Mask wearing came in too late. We were encouraged

A lot of people on zero hours contracts are under pressure to keep going to work

to flock to bars and restaurants. Then lo and behold, a second lockdown."

The Tories hope to scapegoat ordinary people for their disastrous handling of the pandemic. They want to focus on people "breaking the rules".

But as Wendy said, "People are not breaking the rules by going to shops.

"The problem is that the shops are open. The rules are not looking to eliminate the virus. They are putting profit first."



ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Biden heralds return to US 'forever wars'

DONALD TRUMP'S decision last week to cut back US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq was roundly denounced by what Barack Obama called the "blob"—the mainstream national security establishment, whether Republican or Democratic.

The same was true on this side of the pond. A very pompous retired general tut-tutted on BBC Radio Four's Today programme, somehow omitting to mention that the British Army was roundly defeated in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The clever liberal columnist Edward Luce was more honest when he wrote in the Financial Times, "Whatever else can be said about Mr Trump's foreign policy, he did not start new wars (though there are still 60 days to go)."

Luce is right to qualify his remark—Trump is perfectly capable of capping his scorched-earth refusal to accept defeat by starting a war with Iran.

Nevertheless, Trump campaigned against what he called the "forever wars" waged in the Greater Middle East by his predecessors both Republican and Democrats.

His successor, Joe Biden, is a "forever wars" man, who voted for the invasion of Iraq and devised a plan to partition the country to quell the resistance to the US and British occupation.

He supports the policy, pursued especially by the younger Bush, to use US military power to promote "democracy"—in reality, neoliberalism—around the world.

And gathering around the cabinet Biden is assembling are the kind of hawks who sought to shape Obama's foreign policy. They include Samantha Power, US ambassador to the United Nations 2013-17, a consistent advocate of "humanitarian" military intervention.

She was an architect of the disastrous Nato intervention in Libya in 2011 and tried to persuade Obama to do the same during the Syrian civil war.

So did Antony Blinken, a former Biden aide who is expected to become secretary of state or national security adviser.

An ex-Obama official says he "would be visibly tougher on Russia and more receptive to the idea of ideological competition with China, cranking up a few notches the democracy promotion and human rights dimension of foreign policy".

Failure

All this ignores the reality that Trump came out of the failure of the neoliberal imperialism of the preceding decades.

This is brought out by Luce in another column where he laments the US's lack of "strategic thinkers". He gives the example of the Democratic Party policy intellectual Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was national security adviser to president Jimmy Carter 1977-81 at the beginning of what is often called the Second Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski made a number of initiatives aimed at weakening Russia. The most important followed the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. He devised the policy of arming and funding Islamist guerrillas to create Moscow's own Vietnam. The USSR did lose, but out of its defeat came al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and, eventually, ISIS.

In a 1998 interview Brzezinski boasted of "drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap". Asked whether he regretted promoting radical Islamism, he retorted: "What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

Historians now query whether Brzezinski did actually devise this cunning plan. But what matters today is the mentality that the interview reveals.

The immense suffering of the people of Afghanistan for more than 40 years now is less important for "strategic thinkers" such as Brzezinski than advancing the "world-historical" interests of the US imperialism.

Biden plans to convene a "summit of democracies" next year. The aim here is patently to brigade together Washington's traditional Western allies, plus additions such as Narendra Modi's India, to push back against China and Russia.

These two rivals, who undoubtedly have taken advantage of Obama's caution and Trump's incoherence, will be branded as "authoritarian" threats to liberal democracy.

The result could be something closer to a real Cold War. Brzezinski would feel quite at home.



AT A demonstration against deportation charter flights in Brixton in March

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

'I won't last long,' says man threatened with deportation

by TOMÁŠ TENGEY-EVANS

A JAMAICAN man threatened with deportation from Britain says that his "life would be in danger" if he's sent back in two weeks' time.

John—not his real name—is one of at least eight people who have been booked onto a charter flight scheduled to take off on 2 December.

"My life would be in danger," he told Socialist Worker. "If I go back there, I know what would happen to me."

"I wouldn't last too long."

The Tories tried to deport John on the last Jamaica charter flight in February.

He was taken off the plane at the last minute after a successful legal challenge blocked some of the deportations.

Removal

John was locked up in Colnbrook immigration removal centre, near Heathrow Airport, after signing on at the Home Office's Eaton House last Wednesday.

He hasn't been able to see his three children, aged 12, eight and five, or his pregnant partner since.

"No visitors are allowed to come inside this place," he explained. "My partner and

my 12 year old daughter were sat outside for five and a half hours, waiting for the decision about me."

"When I was detained on that day, I couldn't say anything to them."

John says the family is "finding it very difficult" because "we did everything by the book". "My solicitor sent off the paperwork, with recorded delivery, to the Home Office a few weeks ago," he said. "The Home Office said they'd tried to take



Colnbrook detention centre

Detainees faced with horrific conditions

JOHN HAS been taking medication for depression for five years. But he was forced to go without them when he first came to Colnbrook.

"On Saturday they came into the room because I was very distressed."

"I was crying my eyes out. I had no sleep for two days, and they're telling me they can't give me my medication."

It wasn't until the following lunchtime that John saw a doctor who restarted his medication.

He added that he's "finding it very difficult to cope" inside Colnbrook.

"There aren't any precautions with health," John said. "When you go to get your medication, there aren't any masks provided."

"I see bloodstains on my bed."

£65 from my partner's account and couldn't, and that's why my application was refused.

"But that's not true, my partner went to the bank and no one tried to take no money out and there is money in there."

John was forced to flee Jamaica in 2002 after a gang tried to murder him. "In 2001, I was kidnapped, they cut my wrists and shot at me as I was going over a fence."

John added that the gang had also targeted other members of his family, "burning my brother with acid. So what would happen to me if I went back?"

He came to Britain and was given indefinite leave between 2004 and 2015, when he was sentenced on a drugs charge. The Tories are trying to justify the flights by claiming the people being deported are "serious criminals".

It's part of a divide and rule strategy that falsely paints some people as "good migrants" and others as "bad migrants".

There should be no deportations—whether people have been convicted of crimes or not.

Anti-racists must fight to stop deportation flights and bring down Britain's racist immigration system.

Thousands of students face exams anxiety

by SADIE ROBINSON

OVER 700,000 students across England are due to take exams next summer. They have suffered months of disruption because of the pandemic.

Yet so far the Tories' only acknowledgement of this is to postpone exams for three weeks.

Julia, a Year 13 student in north London due to take A-Levels next year, said this "is not a valid or fair solution".

"There's no way we can all sit exams undisrupted," she told Socialist Worker. "One solution is allowing the teacher to cut one paper out of the usual three. This would cut content and reduce stress."

Governments in Scotland and Wales have announced that some of next year's exams are cancelled, although the detail matters (see below). This has added to a feeling that they may not go ahead in England.

Julia said the situation is "very stressful". "Motivation is definitely lacking due to the uncertainty," she said. "It's also affecting teachers."

"They want to reassure students but because the government has not announced a solid plan, the

BACK STORY

Students have missed a lot of time in schools and colleges due to the pandemic

● Yet hundreds of thousands are still expected to take exams next year

● There were 566,674 Year 11 students in England in 2019-20 according to government figures released last month

● There were some 192,557 students in Year 13

uncertainty is putting strain on them."

Sheffield school student Patrick is due to sit GCSEs next year. "There is a lot of speculation about what is going to happen with exams," he told Socialist Worker.

"Every day, students and teachers discuss it. It seems there are two likely decisions—either exams go ahead or we will be given teacher assessed grades."

Patrick said using teacher assessed grades would "take away some of the stress" that is causing "anxiety, depression and other mental distresses". But he added that it isn't enough to call for exams



A PROTEST over the Tories' A-Level results fiasco in London earlier this year

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

to be cancelled. Using teacher assessed grades still "opens the door for racial, gender and class discrimination".

"Some argue that exams are more fair as they give students a chance to prove their ability," Patrick explained.

"In his book *Natives*, the rapper Akala talks about how many black and working class students downplay their intelligence in lessons for fear of being labelled a nerd. These students would most

likely do better by sitting exams."

Julia would like exams to be cancelled, but also warned of problems with the alternatives. This follows the grading scandal earlier this year, where students in poorer areas were given lower grades.

"If exams were cancelled the government will have to develop a system for fair centre assessed grades that do not rely on a ranking system or postcodes," said Julia.

Whatever happens, the uncertainty is already having a huge

effect as students fear that mock exams will end up determining their final grades. "Unfortunately all class tests are being taken as seriously as the final ones," explained Julia.

"The government refusing to hear student voices is leading to more stress. The level of support is non-existent."

On other pages...
Why the Labour left loses
>>> Pages 14&15

'Whatever they decide now, the working class will still lose out'

ROUTINE NHS care is being delayed in an attempt to cope with the devastating second Covid-19 spike.

The Welsh government announced earlier this month that all exams for 2021 would be cancelled.

But students will still sit "assessed tasks" in a classroom setting under teacher supervision.

Ruth Davies from the NAHT union said this essentially means "exams by stealth". "Pupils will be given externally set and marked tests, just in the classroom," she said. "We can't see how that isn't an exam."

Julia said the headlines were "misleading".

"They're essentially still doing exam board set exams in classrooms," she said. "And they didn't specify the details. So

there's the issue of how they are going to standardise them and make them fairer."

In Scotland, National 5 exams, the equivalent of GCSEs in England and Wales, have been cancelled for 2021. Students will be graded instead using teacher assessments and coursework.

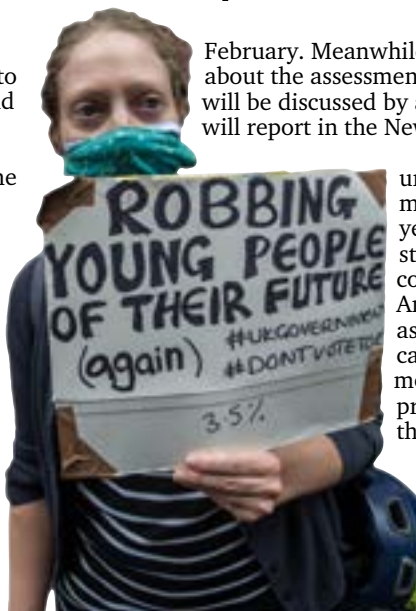
But Higher and Advanced Higher exams are still due to go ahead.

The Scottish government has said it will make a final decision on those in mid-

February. Meanwhile, detail about the assessments in Wales will be discussed by a panel that will report in the New Year.

The uncertainty means yet more stress and confusion. And teacher assessments can sound more progressive than they are.

They don't mean that teachers can simply choose students' grades.



Anger over Tories' anti working class policies

Their assessments also go through a "moderation" process. Teachers often come under pressure to give lower grades for fear that higher ones will simply be downgraded.

Patrick argued that, whatever happens next year, the problems go beyond exams.

"The purpose of the education system is not to help students reach their full potential," he said.

"It is a tool of social stratification designed to do two things. Firstly, to create a competent but obedient working class. Secondly, to keep the rich at the top of society and the poor at the bottom."

"This was made blatantly clear last year as students at private schools received a rise in grades 2.7 percent higher than those in secondary comprehensives."

"The exam system exists to

put up barriers to working class children. So no matter what the government decides on exams, the working class will lose out."

Forcing students through a stressful series of exams that end up limiting their knowledge is not the best way to deliver education—at any time.

It pushes students to cram the facts they need for the exams into their heads, rather than encourage learning for its own sake.

"A good education system would make us learn how to work together and prepare us for the future," said Patrick. "Instead our worth is determined by our ability to memorise facts and regurgitate them under exam conditions."

Exams should be scrapped. But "alternatives" that are really based on the same ideology must be resisted too.



Fight Rishi Sunak's pay attack on workers in public sector

by SARAH BATES

TORY CHANCELLOR Rishi Sunak is set to announce a fresh public sector pay cap this week as part of new budget plans.

Right wing think tank, the Centre for Policy Studies, said last Friday that as much as £23 billion could be “saved” through a three-year freeze.

Such a freeze on public sector wages will amount to a real-terms cut—an attack no worker can afford after ten years of austerity.

It's due to hit millions working in education, local government and many other areas.

NHS workers are set to be excluded from the cut, and Sunak has promised an extra £3 billion for the health service.

It's a cynical attempt to play off one section of workers against another.

Hard

“I hear from a lot of social workers and people in schools that we've actually been working just as hard, but we're never recognised,” said social worker Helen.

“People don't want NHS workers to be included in the pay freeze, but they feel we're being pitted against them.”

Leah, a nurse in Essex, says the Tory plans “wouldn't be fair” as “we've all played a part in the crisis”.

BACK STORY

Chancellor Rishi Sunak was set to deliver a spending review on Wednesday of this week

●The review was almost certain to include a pay freeze for most public sector workers

●The Tories hailed public sector workers as heroes at the start of the pandemic

●But most have endured more than a decade of pay freezes—real terms pay cuts—by Labour and Tory governments since the financial crash of 2008

“It has shown how important all sorts of public sector workers are to society and keeping it running,” Leah told Socialist Worker.

“We have all contributed over the last six months, which have been awful, and ultimately we all need to be treated the same.”

The government claims to be prioritising “frontline” workers. But every worker deserves a real pay rise, not just those who the Tories deem to be worthy.

Attempts to prioritise the NHS over other services and industries is a calculated endeavour to divide and rule workers—not to reward those who deserve it.

It's time for the unions to build the fight that can stop these attacks.



WORKERS ARE angry at pay insult

Last week union leaders wrote a private letter to Sunak telling him to back off.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said, “I'm really conscious of the feeling out there that governments only seem to recognise the true value of labour when it's withdrawn”.

Contribution

And she asked that the government “stands by key workers and respects the contribution they are continuing to make”.

But now is the time for strikes and protests, not letters or vague hints at

industrial action. It will take more than outraged words from trade union leaders. They need to start the fightback now—that means campaigning, balloting their members for strikes and arguing that action is necessary.

Workers need to start organising to create an explosive atmosphere to make the Tories' plans unfeasible.

Public sector workers need to unite with private sector workers. And we need a united fight against the Tories' and bosses' attempts to make working class people pay for the coronavirus crisis.

Public sector workers endured an

eight-year long pay cut from 2010. It could have been beaten if more action had been launched.

The Tories are vicious, but they are also weak. The government has been forced into a series of U-turns, such as the A-Levels results fiasco and its refusal to fund free school meals.

The labour movement can't repeat the mistakes of the past—only national action can fend off these attacks.

Fight job losses, fight the virus, support the strikes—organised by People Before Profit, Tue 1 Dec, 7pm, bit.ly/PBP1Dec

‘The unions have to be strong’

THE Tory government is nasty. But it is also weak and can be beaten.

Teacher Chris Denson is on the NEU's national executive committee.

Chris told Socialist Worker, “The unions have to be really strong over this.”

“We're proposing a motion to our local district on Wednesday, where

we say unions should coordinate their response.”

“It's an absolute failure of the ruling class to act that has led to workers across the public and private sectors hurting like this.”

“Just like the financial crisis in 2008, we can't be the ones to be made to pay for their inaction.”



Public sector fight in 2011

Take cash off tax dodgers and the war machine

THE CUTS to pay come just as the government has promised an additional £16.5 billion to the armed forces.

Emma Davis, a teacher in east London, said, “Six months ago they were clapping for key workers.”

Now they are attacking us with a pay freeze while pouring billions into the military.

“This shows what the government's priorities are—prioritising profit over human life.”

Workers are rightly seething that there's cash for bombs, but none for those who provide essential services.

HMRC worker Charlotte told Socialist Worker the plans “make me furious”.

“Rishi Sunak's big thing was the furlough scheme. Tax office workers went over and above to make it work.”

“Now they've been kicked in the teeth.”

“The money is there if you look at the tax avoiding companies like Amazon. They can exploit loopholes.”

“That's down to a lack of political will to make them pay up.”

Emma said, “We need to link the fights for pay and jobs together.”

“If there's billions for the military, why isn't there money for jobs and pay?”

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Spending review is plan for more Tory austerity

A PAY freeze isn't the only measure Sunak was expected to announce. He's due to cut the British international aid budget from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent of national income.

Warnings will also be issued stating that the government will have to slash its spending.

Sunak claims “there's absolutely no way in which anyone can say” the new plans amount to austerity.

He said the injection of cash into homelessness programmes and the promise of more NHS staff represent an increase in government public sector spending.

But the NHS money was cash already promised earlier this year. And the British Medical Association says over £10 billion extra NHS funding is needed just to tackle the backlog in care caused by the pandemic.

The governments' new strategy involves a national infrastructure bank, with a headquarters in the north of England. Sunak boasted that his plans showed the Tories

“are absolutely committed to levelling-up opportunities so those living in all corners of the UK get their fair share of our future prosperity.”

He could not be more wrong. Sunak plans equal opportunities austerity for everyone in Britain whether they live in Nairn, Northumberland or Northampton.

Sunak—happy to make workers pay

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

TORY PLANS WON'T BRING FESTIVE CHEER

THE TORIES are driving ordinary people to risk their lives so bosses can keep chasing profits.

Boris Johnson has unveiled the new tier system set to be in place when England exits national lockdown next week.

Perhaps the biggest change is that non-essential businesses, such as shops, hairdressers, pubs, restaurants and gyms, will be encouraged to open their doors for the festive rush.

The relaxation of the restrictions comes despite astronomically high transmission rates in some parts of England.

In the week before Socialist Worker went to press, the infection rate in Staffordshire was 385 per 100,000 people and 442 per 100,000 in Oldham.

The Tory government uses the guise of delivering a so-called “normal Christmas” in order to tempt people to spend money and keep the bosses happy.

This is despite top scientists warning that relaxing the rules for the festive period will mean soaring death rates.

Dr Gabriel Scally, a member of the Independent Sage group, said, “There is no point in having

a very merry Christmas and then burying friends and relations in January and February.

“We need to think very seriously about Christmas and how we're going to spend it.”

The detail of the Tory plans show how thinly veiled their fakery is.

In the highest tier, it's likely it will be easier to see family and friends inside businesses than in your own home.

And some evidence shows that people are prepared to endure lockdown through December in order to keep people safe.

A poll by the Observer newspaper showed that the public wanted a locked-down Christmas over new January restrictions by a margin of 54 percent to

“It will be easier to see family and friends inside businesses than in your own home

33 percent. It's completely understandable that people want to be freed from the restrictions on their lives.

But measures will be necessary to temper the spread of coronavirus until a vaccine is successfully rolled out.

These should come as a result of listening to the science, rather than because businesses don't want their cash flow interrupted.

And restrictions should come with economic support from the government.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has said his insufficient furlough scheme will last until the end of March.

But what of the people struggling with Universal Credit or workers on zero hours contracts? What about parents struggling to find childcare under the new rules?

What about those who can't afford the 20 percent pay cuts under furlough?

There are millions of people who are slipping through the cracks of state support during the pandemic.

As has become the norm during the pandemic, Tory plans put people last and profit first—this time with a festive colouration.

DON'T LET THEM DIVIDE US

CHANCELLOR Rishi Sunak's spending review on Wednesday was set to assault every sector of workers.

Leaks suggested he would not only curb pay for millions of public sector workers but also attack some of the lowest paid.

He was expected to stop plans to raise the national living wage by 5.6 percent for two million workers.

Hourly rates were due to rise from £8.72 to £9.21 in April. That figure is far less than a

genuine living wage. But the Tories were expected to lower it to a two percent rise.

And any attack on public sector wages encourages private sector bosses to carry through their own pay cuts.

The Tories hope to succeed through division. They want to set the person who has just lost their job in a pub or a cinema against the civil service worker or the teacher.

They hope unemployed people will be angry at those who, rightly,

want a pay rise. They want us to blame each other rather than those at the top. There must be a united battle for jobs and pay and it's urgent.

Jobs are going every day. This week clothing retailers Peacocks and Jaeger went under, putting more than 4,700 jobs at risk.

The owner, billionaire Philip Day, had missed a deadline to sell the two brands.

A united working class has the power to break the weak and stumbling Tories.

Socialist Worker Appeal to raise £125,000

I SUPPORT THE APPEAL BECAUSE...

“Socialist Worker has stood beside us against a university that prioritises profit over their students' health and wellbeing. SW is a vital tool in amplifying the voices

of those fighting for a better world, and taking the fight to the Tories.”
Izzy Smitheman
University of Manchester
Tower Occupier



Total so far... £102,006

To donate go to socialistworker.co.uk/appeal
Call 020 7840 5607 or send a cheque, payable to 'SW Appeal' to PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ





Rage at police powers in France

TENS OF thousands of people took to the streets of Paris and other French cities on Saturday in furious protests against a new security law.

The government wants to create a new criminal offense of publishing images of police officers with “intent to cause them harm”.

This would include images of police acting violently against protesters such as the Yellow Vests and anti-racism demonstrators.

Offenders would face a maximum penalty of up to one year in prison and a £40,000 fine.

The law would also give police new powers to video people and unlimited access to security cameras in shops, public buildings and housing complexes.

Cops will be free to use drones with facial recognition technology to monitor protest marches.

At the same time, in a separate education bill, the government wants to criminalise university protests, especially blockades and occupations.

And new Islamophobic measures are on top of all these new repressive moves.

There were at least 20,000 on the Paris demonstration. It was met with tear gas and flashball assaults.

The laws were set to go through the lower house of the French parliament this week and then go to the Senate. But the real contest will come if the state tries to use them.

Fresh general strike in Greece

WORKERS IN Greece were set to launch a general strike on Thursday of this week against attacks on conditions and union rights.

They are fighting a major assault on their working conditions by the Tory-type New Democracy government.

Prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis wants to introduce new legislation that would allow bosses to force through longer working hours with no increase in pay.

His new bill would also introduce a 50 percent turnout threshold on strike ballots, and restrictions on the right to picket.

The strike builds on growing battles throughout the pandemic.

Health workers staged hour long strikes and protests on 12 November.

And workers defied the government's attempts to ban demonstrations on Tuesday of last week marking the anniversary on an uprising against Greece's former military dictatorship.

Protests in Guatemala— ‘The people have had it’

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

ANGRY PROTESTERS took to the streets in Guatemala in Central America, last week.

They set light to the Congress building after it approved a budget that favoured big business and the rich but cut education and health services.

Around 10,000 people demonstrated in front of the national palace in Guatemala City on Saturday. Protesters called on the president to veto the budget.

They also demanded prosecution of government officials for corruption.

“I feel like the future is being stolen from us. We don't see any changes—this cannot continue like this,” said Mauricio Ramírez, a 20 year old university student.

Anger has been building amongst Guatemalans at the rampant inequality highlighted during coronavirus.

One particularly stark example was that legislators had approved over £50,000 for their meals while cutting funding to tackle the pandemic.

The budget was voted through at dawn by congress on Tuesday last week. Many protesters believed that this was an attempt to pass it at a time when it would be less noticed.

Hurricane

Some said they thought the government had hoped Hurricane Eta and Covid-19 would act as a distraction.

One protester told the AFP news agency, “Guatemala cries with blood—the people have had it. We have been living while getting stomped for over 200 years.”

Others denounced the lack of

economic aid during the pandemic. Karla Figueroa who is a professional translator told Al Jazeera, “We're tired of corruption. It doesn't matter which government— they're all the same.”

Guatemala currently has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world. But this didn't stop congress cutting £18 million aid that had been promised to combat it.

Hurricane Eta has swept through Central America. The storm has left thousands of mainly indigenous Guatemalans displaced and living in temporary shelters. And now there are reports that coronavirus has come to these shelters.

Since the beginning of the pandemic the government has been criticised for its handling of the coronavirus.

Thousands of Guatemalans have lost their jobs and the infrastructure—especially in rural areas—to combat the spread of the virus is virtually nonexistent.

The government used police special forces to attack protesters. But the authorities are shaken.

After president Alejandro Giammattei ignored calls to veto the budget, vice president Guillermo Castillo called on him to resign together.

Protests in Guatemala show part of a trend in many parts of the world.

Workers and the poor everywhere are confronting the corruption of their governments and their fatal mishandling of the virus.

UGANDA

Cops massacre opposition

UP TO 37 people have been shot dead by police in Uganda, east Africa, during anti-government protests.

The protests came after the arrest of presidential candidate and former Afrobeat singer Bobi Wine. He was later charged with spreading coronavirus at a campaign rally.

Groups of mainly young people set up barricades and burnt tyres in the streets of the capital, Kampala, and other towns.

Images on social media showed police in Kampala firing indiscriminately at protests. Men in plain clothes, believed to be

security personnel, were seen firing automatic weapons. More than 350 people were arrested

Wine—real name Robert Kyagulanyi—is one of 11 candidates challenging president Yoweri Museveni, who has been president for 34 years. The election is set for January.

Kyagulanyi was released on bail on Friday after a court appearance. He is popular because he voices some of the bitterness of the country's poor.

Although he has only a vague programme to tackle poverty, he is seen by many as a necessary change from Museveni's repressive and pro-business rule.

HONG KONG

Movement leaders face jail

LEADING PRO-democracy activists in Hong Kong face jail after pleading guilty to charges relating to protests last year.

Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Ivan Lam could be imprisoned for five years when they are sentenced next week. They had joined an unauthorised protest outside police headquarters last year, and had encouraged others to join it.

A draconian security law imposed on Hong Kong by China in June has made it easier for the authorities to target activists.

It followed a huge movement opposing attempts by China to target its political opponents in Hong Kong.

The law brought in a new offence of terrorism that covers “activities which seriously jeopardise public health, safety or security”. This can include protests and strikes.

At least 31 people have been arrested under the new law so far. And the authorities appear to be ratcheting up the repression.

Police sexism runs deep

THE ARTICLE by Sarah Bates (Socialist Worker online, 14 November) about the sexism of the police relating to serial killer Peter Sutcliffe is shocking and accurate.

Another element of what happened was the treatment of women who were involved in protests at that time.

I was part of a protest in 1980 that picketed a Bradford Cinema.

It was showing a film that used graphic publicity of a boot coming down on a woman lying face up on the ground.

We picketed the cinema to object to the film being shown, particularly when Sutcliffe was still attacking women.

Eleven of us were arrested and held in Bradford police station cells until the film was over at 11pm when the buses had stopped running.

Most of us had to travel back to Manningham—where later we found that Sutcliffe lived.

When we asked for access to safe transport home we were told by the police that “Little girls that play with fire deserve to get burnt”.

Subsequently we were all found guilty of the civil offence of Blemish of the Peace.

In the newspaper reporting our full names and addresses were published.

That was how seriously women's safety was taken by West Yorkshire police and the media.

Jill Chanter
Sheffield



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Continue the fight for Palestine—but outside of the Labour Party

THE RIGHT has continuously deemed left wing activists who criticise Israel and its oppressive actions towards Palestinians as antisemites.

This is a dangerous tool for silencing those who show solidarity to Palestinians.

Anti-Semitism is a poison in this world and it is on the rise. And trying to expel anti-racists like Jeremy Corbyn from the Labour party is taking away from the fight against real antisemitism.

Keir Starmer's undying support for Israel is a massive blow to Palestinians across the UK and in Palestine.

It is also a blow to the supporters of Palestinian rights within the Labour party and those outside of

it. Starmer has made it clear that you can't support Palestinians if you are in the Labour party.

By ostracising those who speak out against the crimes of Israel, he is engaging in the game of trying to appeal to the right in order to win elections.

Despite the fact that Corbyn was reinstated to the party it was still a massive blow for the labour left and in the fight for Palestinian rights.

Corbyn has opposed racism all his political life unlike many of his opposers on the Labour right.

He is right to stand for Palestinian rights, against imperialist war and to oppose austerity.

Starmer tried to push him out to

show that Labour will maintain the current system in place.

Starmer will not question the military, he will not stand up for issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement—which he deemed a “moment”.

He will not stand up for the oppressed and hungry in order to maintain unity with Johnson's destructive government.

The fight for real change—including standing up for Palestinians—exists outside of Labour.

Now is the time to speak out against Starmer and show complete solidarity with all the oppressed people he chooses to ignore.

Layla Assam
Bristol

Just a thought...

Corbyn shouldn't have apologised

CORBYN IS a man of integrity forced to lie to stay within the party that he worked for all his life. I understand why he did. I wish he hadn't.

An Drew
On Facebook

● CORBYN IS hopelessly shackled to the Labour Party and the system it represents.

Ian Brooke
On Facebook

Prisons must be improved

I WRITE in response to Kim Hunter's letter 'Time to tear down the jails' (letters, 11 November).

I have no doubt anyone visiting UK prisons would be shocked by the terrible conditions of most of them.

We'll not be rid of prisons before being rid of capitalism.

But while they do exist they ought to be places of decency.

They shouldn't be 200 year old dungeons where we “lock people up and throw away the key”.

Jim Barlow
Glasgow

Greenwashing is a sick joke

IS ANYONE else struck by the number of ads on TV from oil companies telling us how green they are?

Beyond irony.

Dee Wise
On Facebook

Statue misses the point Spycops were powerless against mass movements

LAST WEEK saw the unveiling of a statue to honour the Enlightenment philosopher and author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Mary Wollstonecraft.

It's been 200 years since she wrote about the emancipation of women—a statue to acknowledge her contribution is long overdue.

But the unveiling of a female nude representing “everywoman” with an objectified naked female form, has rightly been met with considerable backlash. Strongly influenced by the American

and French revolutions, she linked the emancipation of women to the social and political liberation of the people as a whole.

There was scope to do justice to this amazing woman whose life coincided with a period of revolutionary upheavals.

We don't need another landmark statue of a female nude. She didn't want women to be defined by their biology but by their potential.

We should build a statue of her that represents what she stood for—total equality.

Helen Blair and Lorna McKinnon
Glasgow

AS A founder-member of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) I have been reading with great interest the reports of how the spycops observed and infiltrated the movement.

We should unreservedly condemn police dishonesty, the abuse of women and the way the state tried to oppose legal and legitimate political movements.

But it's also important to remember that the police surveillance was a tribute to the success of the movement.

And it did not in any

way obstruct the activities of the VSC. The demonstrations went ahead and grew larger. We played our part in an international movement to oppose a criminal and futile war. We helped to deter prime minister Harold Wilson from sending British troops to help his American friends. We drew in thousands of young people, many of whom went on to be active in other political struggles.

Some are still around. And we were right.

Few people would now justify US policy in Vietnam.

So condemn the spycops.

But don't be intimidated—they were totally powerless against a movement that mobilised thousands and fought for clear political principles.

Ian Birchall
Central London

THE DRUG LORDS' PANDEMIC PROFIT

How did public funds meant to help us find a vaccine for coronavirus end up in the pockets of some of the richest corporations on the planet? And, why will billions of people still be without hope even when a vaccine emerges? **Yuri Prasad** says Big Pharma has some big questions to answer

NEWS OF a vaccine for Covid-19 is for millions of people a source of hope. It's a way out of the misery of lockdown, the constant fear for friends and family, and the news of relentlessly rising death tolls.

But in the boardrooms of many giant pharmaceutical companies there is optimism for a very different reason—it is the prospect of huge profits ahead.

Even as the virus spread in January and February this year, many “Big Pharma” firms were reluctant to enter the race for a vaccine. They knew from previous epidemics that research is generally expensive, slow and prone to failure.

What, they asked, if the coronavirus simply went away, as the Sars virus did only a few years ago? Even if research created new knowledge, the firms would be left with apparently worthless investments.

Two things changed the bosses' minds.

First, as the virus spread around the world to become a pandemic, the size of the potential market for a vaccine grew enormously. Then came scientific predictions that the coronavirus could become a permanent feature, a recurring threat to the whole of humanity.

If true, that would mean people will need not only a one-time vaccination, but potentially a lifetime of regular top-ups.

The three drug giants that sell the world vaccines for common flu—Sanofi, GlaxoSmithKline and Seqirus—know what that means. Together they have flu jab sales worth up to £4 billion a year.

Now Big Pharma's financial analysts predicted there could be £7.22 billion in global sales of Covid-19 vaccines in 2021, and much more to follow.

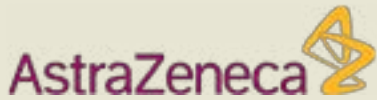
The talk of a massive new market whet their appetites.

Second, governments desperate to avoid lockdowns and the risks to profits that follow, decided to hand over astronomical sums to the pharmaceutical industry.

The money was a bribe to persuade them to them to invest in research, development and manufacturing.



Pharmaceutical firms waited for a mass market and funding before starting on vaccines



AstraZeneca

State funding to develop vaccine: **£2,208,000,000**

- Working on vaccines with the University of Oxford
- Best known for cancer and diabetes drugs

Scandals—In 2016, in the US, AstraZeneca paid £4.1 million in settlement of charges related to bribery and corruption.

It is also facing charges over its popular drug, Seroquel. It's licensed to treat schizophrenia, but the company was marketing it to cover everything from anger management to dementia to sleeplessness.



Sanofi

State funding to develop vaccine: **£874,000,000**

- Working on multiple vaccines
- World's largest producer of vaccines

Scandals—Earlier this year Sanofi was accused of “involuntary manslaughter” over the devastating effects of its epilepsy drug Depakine.

It is suspected of causing birth defects in thousands of children whose mothers took the medicine while pregnant.



GlaxoSmithKline

State funding to develop vaccine: **£837,000,000**

- Working on multiple vaccines
- Produces drugs for diseases including asthma, cancer, diabetes and for mental health conditions

Scandals—Pleaded guilty in the US to charges relating to false claims for its anti-depressants Paxil and Wellbutrin.

Forced to pay out £2.2 billion in fines, the largest ever paid by a pharmaceutical company to the US government.

It was also fined for promoting Paxil as a treatment for depression in under-18s. The company arranged for doctors to go on all expenses paid trips to 5 star hotels as part of its marketing.



Pfizer

State funding to develop vaccine: **£544,000,000**

- Working on a vaccine with BioNTech
- Best known for Lipitor anti-cholesterol drug, Pregabalin for relief of severe pain and Viagra for erectile dysfunction

Scandals—In 1996 research for its experimental antibiotic Trovafloxacin led to 50 children in

Nigeria to die while many others suffered deformities. Information from WikiLeaks shows the company tried to find evidence of corruption against the Nigerian attorney general to persuade him to drop legal action against Pfizer.

In 2015, the company announced plans to move its headquarters to Ireland to avoid US taxes.



Johnson & Johnson

State funding to develop vaccine: **£361,000,000**

- Working on a single vaccine with subsidiary Janssen Pharmaceuticals
- Subsidiary firms specialise in mental illness, neurology, gastrointestinal disorders and HIV/Aids

Scandals—Tens of thousands of women have taken legal action against Johnson & Johnson after suffering serious complications following a vaginal mesh implant.

Most complained that faulty medical devices sold by the firm were the cause, and that it had aggressively marketed its implants despite knowing the risks.

In 2007, the firm started legal action against the American Red Cross demanding the charity stop using the Red Cross symbol.

●Government funding figures exclude sums spent on buying supplies of vaccines. Some firms have received funds from more than one state.

COVID-19 TREATMENTS

Remdesivir—paying millions for drug that doesn't even work

DURING THE first wave of the virus last summer, US president Donald Trump boasted that he had bought the world's entire supply of Remdesivir. This was a drug said to be crucial to recovery from Covid-19.

The anti-viral medication was developed by Gilead Sciences using US government funds and was now being sold to the same government at exorbitant rates.

A single vial of Remdesivir is priced at £391—around 50 times the cost of manufacture.

That, and the way the firm hides its intellectual property and profits in tax havens, ought to be a crime in itself.

But the bigger scandal is that there is little evidence that Remdesivir helps patients recover from Covid-19. Yet both US and European Union (EU) drug authorities have licenced the treatment and encouraged health services to buy it.

At best, one large study found Remdesivir modestly reduced the time to recover from Covid-19 in hospitalised patients with severe

illness. Two smaller studies said the drug had no impact at all.

Then, just days after getting approval in the US and EU, came the forth and largest study.

Conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the trial showed that Remdesivir does not reduce mortality or the time patients take to recover from Covid-19.

Executives

The WHO conducted research in 405 hospitals in 30 countries. It was about three times as large as the previous three trials put together.

But with the deals done, as far as Gilead's executives are concerned, the money is in the bank.

A journalist working on US medical finance was quick to reassure us that “Investors shouldn't worry much about Gilead [which] expects full-year revenue will be between \$23 billion [£17 billion] and \$25 billion [£18 billion].... What's the main reason for this optimism? Remdesivir.”

group, says, “Moderna already admitted American taxpayers financed 100 percent of this vaccine. Now the company has the gall to turn around and charge us the highest price of any vaccine maker.

“Asking the government to assume all risk for research, development, and production and then showing no restraint in pricing—that is the very definition of profiteering on a pandemic.”

In years gone by, the industry used to explain its high drug prices by talking up the cost and risks of research.

What is their excuse now that the public have shouldered that cost? That future drug research would be jeopardised if they don't “maximise revenue” from the vaccine.

It's the same argument they used in the past to stop factories in the Global

South making cheap copies of their drugs in order to help people infected with HIV/Aids.

The result today will be the same as the past—poverty will lock billions of people in the Global South out of being vaccinated. And that, in turn, will mean coronavirus will continue to spread and remain a danger to humanity.

Nevertheless, the big drugs firms will look at the vaccines as a chance to repair their battered reputations.

The industry was found to be the most poorly regarded sector in the US last year, according to a Gallup survey—below even oil, gas and advertising.

Now the firms will present themselves, and the system they champion, as the saviours of humanity.

Their profiteering show the dangers of outsourcing the development of lifesaving drugs to companies primarily concerned with making money.

Pharmaceutical firms should be publicly owned and democratically controlled. Vaccines should be developed with public money, and given for free to everyone that needs them.

Throughout the pandemic Pfizer has been running adverts which declare, “Science Will Win”.

But it's hard not to draw the conclusion that it's Big Pharma that has once again walked away the winner—and that it's poor and working class people who have paid out.



Big Pharma used to explain its high prices by talking up research costs.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

From Poland to the US and Britain
Fighting for abortion rights

BRISTOL Thu 3 Dec, 7.30pm 688-397-3148	EDINBURGH Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm 431-459-112	LONDON: ISLINGTON Thu 3 Dec, 7pm 874-012-7970	LONDON: NEWHAM Wed 2 Dec, 7.15pm 288-098-8827	MANCHESTER Wed 9 Dec, 7.15pm 323-178-7151
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{ SOCIALIST WORKER }
ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM
Uprising in Belarus—can workers win?

Wed 2 Dec, 7pm
281-634-5938

BRADFORD
Islamophobia and the politics of fear

Thu 3 Dec, 7pm
885-9187-7552

BURNLEY AND PENDLE
The politics of food—who is to blame for obesity?

Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm
875-9876-0976

CAMBRIDGE
The politics of food—who is to blame for obesity?

Thu 3 Dec, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CARDIFF
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm
630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD
How revolution ended slavery—the Haitian Revolution

Thu 10 Dec, 6.30pm
829-532-8731

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN AND PERTH
Drugs—the socialist case for radical reform

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

894-2628-7708
EASTBOURNE
Engels—a revolutionary in Eastbourne

Thu 10 Dec,
6.30pm

EAST MIDLANDS
The bloody history of the British Empire

Wed 2 Dec, 7pm
354-874-4790

GLASGOW
Engels at 200—a celebration of his revolutionary life and work

Thu 3 Dec, 6.30pm
851-5254-7239

HUDDERSFIELD
#EndSARS—what's behind the revolt in Nigeria?

Thu 3 Dec, 7pm

290-168-1804
KENT
South Africa after apartheid where did it all go wrong?

Thu 3 Dec,
8.15pm
434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
After the crisis—what future do socialists want?

Thu 3 Dec,
6.30pm

LEEDS
Fake news and alternative facts—who controls the media?

Thu 3 Dec, 7pm
935-5290-8076

LIVERPOOL
Marxism and mental distress in a time of pandemics

Wed 9 Dec,
7pm

LONDON: HACKNEY
Covid-19, science and 'irrational thinking'

Thu 3 Dec,
7.30pm

798-534-2585
LONDON: HARINGEY
How can Palestine be free?

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

LONDON: SOUTH
Islamophobia and racism—the politics of fear

Wed 9 Dec, 7pm
497-196-1801

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
Why are the police racist?

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

LONDON: WEST AND NORTH WEST
Engels at 200—a celebration of his revolutionary life and work

Thu 3 Dec,
7.30pm

464-857-8247
NORWICH
Greece and Golden Dawn—how the Nazis were crushed

Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

OXFORD
Big Pharma, the Tories and Covid-19—can a vaccine solve the crisis?

Thu 10 Dec, 7pm
848-5698-5438

PORTSMOUTH
Chile 1973 and resistance today

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE
From Thailand to Nigeria—the return of global revolt?

Thu 3 Dec, 7pm
528-174-9278

SOUTHAMPTON
What would a future socialist society look like?

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES
#EndSARS—what's behind the revolt in Nigeria?

Thu 3 Dec, 7pm
902-964-963

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL
Anger to revolution—what makes people rise up?

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

YORK AND SCARBOROUGH
How slavery was smashed

Wed 2 Dec,
7.30pm

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



The Labour Party—a Marxist History
by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



A Rebel's Guide to Engels by Camilla Royle
£4



Does privilege explain racism? by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



Transgender Resistance by Laura Miles
£10

PHONE 020 7637 1848 WEB bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600
Email enquires@swp.org.uk
Post PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

Don't miss this book about women's liberation battles

Misbehaving recounts the 1970 Miss World protest in the words of those who made it happen. **Sarah Bates** says the book offers inspirational insights

MISBEHAVING IS the story of the women involved in the protest against the Miss World beauty pageant in 1970.

Activists Sue Finch, Jenny Fortune, Jane Grant, Jo Robinson and Sarah Wilson share their experience of the protest and its impact on their lives.

Woven into their stories are accounts from other activists involved with the emerging Women's Liberation Movement of the early 1970s.

They're accompanied by a series of illustrations that ran through women's liberation literature and some brilliant photographs from Sally Fraser.

Those that cover the first women's conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1970, are particularly interesting.

The contributions read like a potted history of the British protest movement over the last fifty years.

The activists are involved anti-Vietnam war activity, anti-apartheid demonstrations and the Greenham Common anti-nuclear protest camp. They also fight in campaigns against racism and for public services.

Some of the most interesting stories come from what the women did next. An extraordinary number squatted buildings and set up local nurseries, and campaigned for public services so women could work and parent at the same time.

It's inspirational, especially at a time when childcare is privatised, stripped back and inaccessible to vast swathes of women.

This book is a timely reminder that direct action works.

Experience

What *Misbehaving* really gets across is how transformative the experience was for those involved.

Just being able to speak about the reality of their lives in a women's group felt like a revelatory and radical act.

And the joy of protesting at Miss World—"the most exaggerated example of women being judged like cattle"—really shines through.

For young people today, it's hard to imagine that Miss World was such a spectacle.

It drew in hundreds of millions of viewers when it was shown on TV.

It's so interesting to hear the voices of working class women who are at the forefront of struggle. And *Misbehaving* shows us that it's right to protest against the sexist industries that objectify and degrade us.

Misbehaving, printed by Merlin Press, is out now.
Online book launch hosted by Bookmarks bookshop, Friday 27 November. For details go to bit.ly/MisbehavingBookLaunch



JOHN BOYEGA plays a black police officer in a force full of racists

PICTURE: BBC/McQUEEN LIMITED

Small Axe shows truth of racist police

FILM

SMALL AXE: RED, WHITE AND BLUE

On BBC1, 9pm, Sunday 29 November then on BBC iPlayer

THE THIRD film in Steve McQueen's *Small Axe* series—*Red White and Blue*—takes on the institutional racism that exists in the police.

It shows Leroy Logan (John Boyega) and his pursuit to become a police officer, with the determination of changing the racist attitudes from the inside.

It has a lot of important messages. One is that police racism clearly cannot be overcome from within.

Leroy tries to break down these barriers.

In one scene, other police

officers use racist language, all within earshot of Leroy and his colleague Asif (Assad Zaman) in the police cafeteria.

"Those Blacks came along, started causing trouble. Felt I was in that film *Zulu*. Bloody Wogs mate, all the same."

The racism is too much for Asif. He eventually leaves the police.

This is a constant tone throughout the film.

Through Leroy, we can feel a constant sense of struggle against the barriers in society.

Leroy is a normal person who wants to do good in the world. But he can't get his head around the systemic nature of the struggles he is up against.

His dad Kenneth (Steve Toussaint) provides us with the

viewpoint of someone who's been betrayed by society.

He never gets justice for an unprovoked police attack on him.

Asif is important in connecting the dots between the racism faced by Black Caribbean and Asian people.

But their contrasting views of the police point to two different ways of approaching racism.

One is to have faith in the ability to change the system from the inside. The other is to leave the system and look for alternative actions.

Red, White and Blue is another *Small Axe* film worth watching.

It's a no-holds barred view of the police—in a year when racist police brutality has been exposed in the spotlight of struggle.

Harjeevan Gill

DOCUMENTARY

ANTON FERDINAND: FOOTBALL, RACISM AND ME

BBC1, 9pm, Monday 30 November, then on BBC iPlayer

FORMER professional footballer Anton Ferdinand explores the issue of racial abuse in the game from a personal perspective.

The programme follows a sharp rise in reported incidents of racial abuse in football.

Anton talks for the first time about his own highly publicised 2011 incident with former England captain John Terry. Terry was alleged to have racially abused Anton on the pitch.

Anton wants to understand his own story and find out what needs



Anton Ferdinand

to be done to address the problem of racism in the game today.

He also confronts the online abuse he has experienced since, which has affected his mental health, his career and the lives of his loved ones.

DOCUMENTARY

FELA KUTI—FATHER OF AFROBEAT

Available now at bbc.co.uk/iplayer

THIS IS the story of pioneering Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, who created a sound for a continent. Fela Kuti



Fela Kuti

was a counter-cultural revolutionary, he fought injustice with his music.

He was also a thorn in the side of Nigeria's military regimes.

A long series of albums denounced the state and led to continual raids from the Nigerian state, beatings and imprisonment.

Exclusive testimony reveals the complex man behind the maverick performer.

JOHN McDonnell makes a point of always ending his speeches with the word “solidarity.”

“It’s a word upon which the Labour and trade union movement was founded,” he once said. “It taught us that unity is strength and an injury to one is an injury to all.”

In that spirit, what solidarity has McDonnell given to his old comrade Jeremy Corbyn?

Along with most of the other members of the Socialist Campaign Group he signed a disapproving statement asking Keir Starmer to restore Corbyn as a Labour MP.

In a tone more of sadness than of anger, the statement said the decision to withdraw the whip from Corbyn was “wrong and damaging to the Labour Party.” It “severely undermines efforts to unite” behind the report that blamed the left for antisemitism.

Not exactly fighting talk. Especially in the face of continued right wing assaults by Keir Starmer and the Labour right.

Labour first suspended Corbyn. Then when he made concessions he was restored to party membership.

But outrageously Starmer then barred him from the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Corbyn may have the whip reinstated in three months’ time but only if he behaves himself.

And it can’t even be described as a victory if the price of being readmitted to Labour is to stay quiet except in support of Starmer.

THE LEFT MPs had other options. They could have rebelled and resigned the Labour whip, as some Corbyn supporters demanded. They could have sat with Corbyn as independents and been a constant thorn in Starmer’s side.

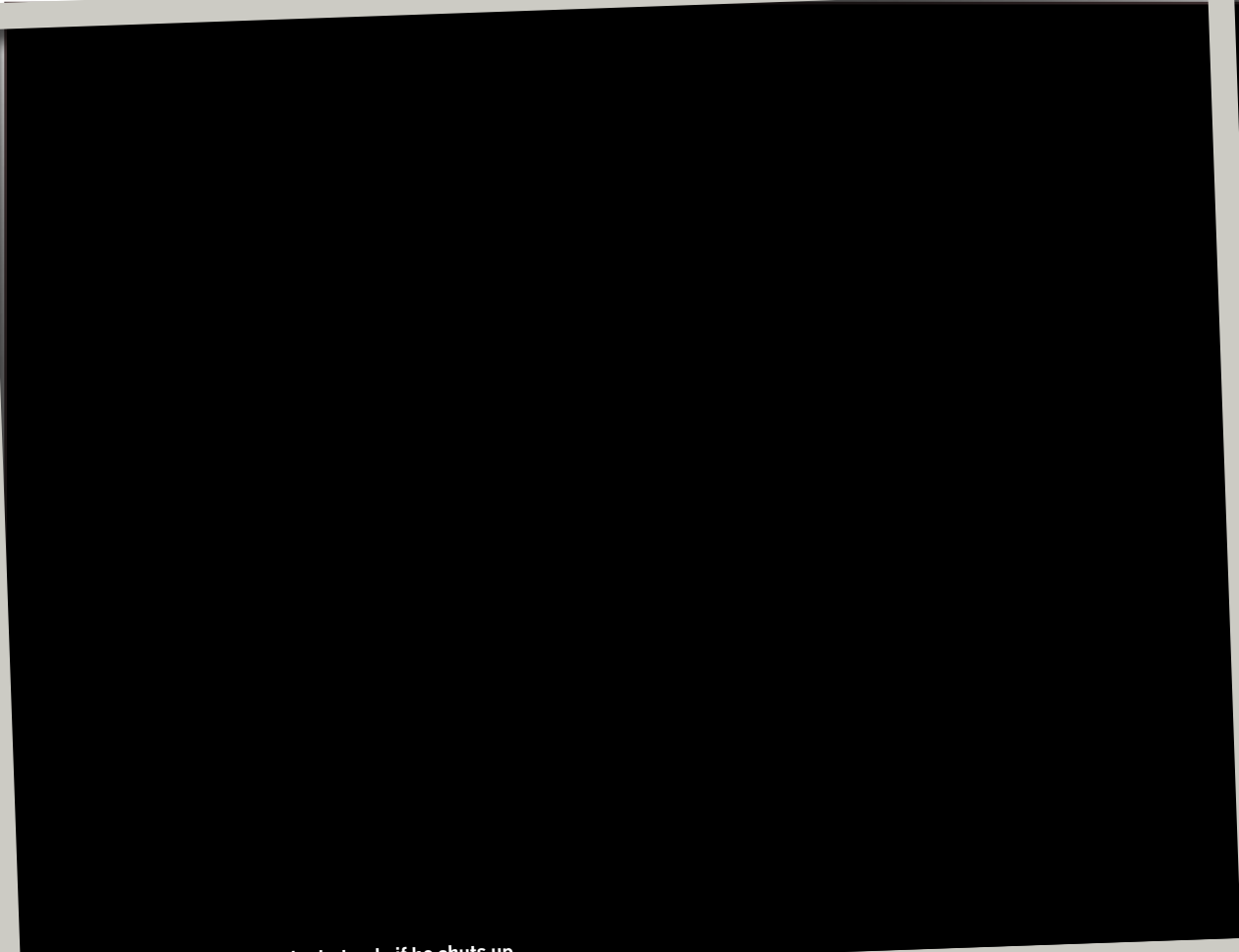
They could have put their words about solidarity into action by breaking from Labour and forming a separate party based on struggle.

But as Richard Burgon—considered one of the left’s more outspoken MPs—cautioned activists, recently, “There’s talk today of a civil war in the Labour Party. I want to be absolutely clear—that serves no one but the Tory government.”

Instead he wanted to plead with Starmer not to pursue expulsions because a divided party loses elections.

Diane Abbott argued the same. For her and Burgon, the lesson of the US presidential election is that the left can play a crucial role in getting right wing party leaders elected.

So that’s their strategy. Instead of waging war on the right, they beg to be allowed to stay in the party.



CORBYN HAS been reinstated— but only if he shuts up

WHY THE LABOUR LEFT LOSES

Keir Starmer is waging a war on the left in Labour. Nick Clark explains how the party’s structures and methods mean the left is always at the mercy of the right



John McDonnell

If you joined Labour under Corbyn, you’ve got a right to be annoyed.

But it wouldn’t be the first time leaders of the Labour left have gathered their supporters, only to march them into line behind a banner of “unity”. Tony Benn did it too.

Benn and his supporters felt they were on the up after they won some victories at Labour conferences, and he came close to becoming deputy leader.

But after a group of right



If you joined Labour under Corbyn you have a right to be enraged

wing MPs quit the party—and some bad opinion polls for Labour—the left were tamed.

The party launched a witch hunt of left activists with a register of organisations allowed to operate inside its structures.

At first Benn stormed out of the national executive meeting where the witch hunt was launched, declaring himself “the real deputy leader.”

He soon apologised.

Within weeks, union leaders—and Benn’s adviser

Jon Lansman—had convinced him not to stand again.

Now Benn argued that the left’s conference victories could be implemented without challenging the right, calling for “unity behind the existing leadership and the existing policies.”

Labour left groups that had pledged to defy the witch hunt and resist the register instead signed up to it and let expulsions go unopposed.

That’s not even the first time this happened. The Labour left’s leaders have been carrying on like this for as long as the party has existed.

Before Labour had even formed its first government, left wing activists complained that its MPs were selling them out in parliament.

Left opposition in the party came from the socialist Independent Labour Party (ILP) led by Ramsay MacDonald.

Against his own ILP members, MacDonald argued that MPs had to respect parliamentary procedures—and that’s why they couldn’t fight over unemployment. Instead he told them to accept “gradual” reforms towards socialism.

As prime minister he didn’t even do that.

LABOUR was elected in 1929 on promises to end a major unemployment crisis. Instead it did the opposite and cut benefit payments to the unemployed.

At the bidding of banks Britain owed money to, MacDonald booted his own party out of government and led a lash-up of Tories, Liberals and ex-Labour ministers.

It was a defining moment of betrayal and a huge crisis for Labour. But the left wing backlash lasted just a couple of years.

Left winger George Lansbury was elected leader in 1931.

The Socialist League, newly formed in 1932, won conference battles demanding far reaching nationalisation measures. Even the most moderate Labour politicians toyed with revolutionary language.

It didn’t last long—by 1934 the right and the union leaders decided they’d had enough socialism.

Lansbury was made to resign in 1935. Party members were later banned from membership of the Socialist League.

Rather than risk their membership of Labour, the League simply disbanded.

Its leader Stafford Cripps was expelled in 1939. When he was allowed back in he went on to implement austerity as Labour’s chancellor in 1947.

After that the left had one last big moment between then and Benn—the members’ support for Nye Bevan in the 1950s.

Bevan quit the Labour government over its decision to introduce prescription charges to the newly formed NHS. He led rebellions against Labour’s

leadership—especially against its support for nuclear weapons.

He had huge support among members, but without the support of any union leaders, he got nowhere. Instead, to make what he saw as progress, he entered right winger Hugh Gaitskell’s government.

This meant making peace with the right, and as foreign secretary he turned on his supporters by speaking in favour of keeping nuclear weapons.

Between then and Benn’s leadership challenge, the left were clutching at straws.

The Labour Party played no part in the great social revolts of the late 1960s.

But throughout the 1970s members were able to pass radical conference resolutions—which the leaders were happy to tolerate and ignore.

THESE apparent policy gains allowed left Labour MPs to take part in the right-led governments of Howard

Wilson and James Callaghan and feel they had some influence. Union leaders—left and right—could also cooperate with those governments in holding down workers’ wages.

The point of all this isn’t to damn today’s left with the betrayals of those who went before. It’s not to sneer at them for failing to learn the lessons of the past either.

In each case, the left’s fatal problem was that their commitment to the Labour Party left them tied and submissive to the right.

In a party whose aim is to govern through parliament and manage the state, the natural leaders and MPs are the ones who aim to do this “responsibly”—the right.

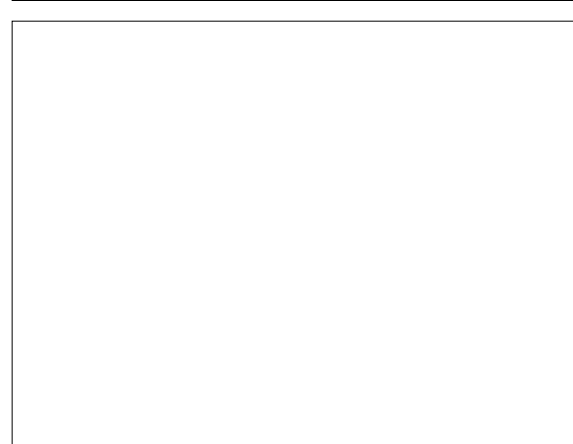
The left thinks they can do it differently—that they can use Labour and parliament to implement much more radical change.

But every attempt meets opposition from the rich, the media—and their own MPs.

MPs’ position in Labour gives them the power to really sabotage the whole thing.

They threaten to do what the left always shy away from—rebel, resign and undermine at every turn, as they did to Corbyn.

It works because control of Labour is central to how the left aim to bring change. So they make all sorts of



Corbyn’s comrades should have reacted far more strongly to Starmer’s assaults (top) Thousands of people were galvanised by Corbyn (above) but they have been let down

accommodations and retreats just to cling on.

They always recoil from any confrontation that might end in a decisive break from the right. They remain the right’s willing prisoners.

Diane Abbott said the left’s job now is to defend the gains they made under the Corbyn years.

If you’re an activist this means years of drudgery and a siege mentality.

It means scrapping to win committee positions while Starmer marginalises you and uses you as election campaign fodder, passing conference motions for him to ignore.

For Corbyn and his allies that means staying quiet and going along with Starmer’s leadership—or worse.

McDonnell’s main regret from his time at the top of Labour is that the left wasn’t “ruthless enough and fast enough”.

Not in taking on the right, but in implementing the punishments of members they demanded under the guise of tackling antisemitism.

“Maybe we should have been harder. Maybe we should have been more ruthless,” he told a recent meeting. “Solidarity.”

READ MORE

● **The Labour Party: A Marxist History**
Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber
£14.99

● **Bad News for Labour: Antisemitism, the Party and Public Belief**
David Miller and others
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● **The Labour Party, antisemitism and Zionism**
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Unity against the rich can undercut ethnic divisions

Ethiopia is facing a civil war—but the chaos won’t be solved by imperialist powers, writes **Charlie Kimber**

ETHIOPIA, A country of 110 million people, is on the verge of civil war.

The fighting could draw in other countries in the Horn of Africa region and lead to mass starvation and vast numbers of refugees.

Hundreds of people have already died and tens of thousands have fled into neighbouring Sudan.

The United Nations has said a “full-scale humanitarian crisis” is unfolding.

Ethiopia’s national government declared war on the northern region of Tigray earlier this month.

Tigray is one of ten semi-autonomous federal states and home to around six million Tigrayan people.

Prime minister Abiy Ahmed ordered airstrikes and a ground invasion after what he claimed was an attack by the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). This is Tigray’s ruling party.

“Tigray is now a hell to its enemies,” said TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael.

“As long as the army of the invaders is in our land, the fight will continue.”

On the other side Abiy’s spokesperson promised to end the “deadly crime spree” of Tigray’s “disgruntled, reactionary and rogue” leaders.

Centre

For 27 years Tigrayans were at the centre of the Ethiopian government.

That was a legacy of the TPLF’s war against the Derg military regime. Launched in 1975, the resistance toppled the Derg in 1991.

Meles Zenawi, a leading member of the TPLF, was prime minister from 1995 until 2012.

He set up a highly authoritarian regime designed to ram through industrial expansion to boost profits and compete with other countries.

Meles became a favourite

ETHIOPIAN TROOPS have been sent into the Tigray region

of the West. He was part of former Labour leader Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa and supported the march of neoliberalism across the continent.

Ethiopia was one of only two African countries named as part of the US’s “coalition of the willing” supporting the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

It also hosted some of the “black sites” where people were taken for torture by the US and its allies.

The Ethiopian military played a key role in hosting US bases and invading Somalia in an attempt to break Islamist movements.

But gradually resistance grew against the regime.

Meles’ successor was forced out in 2018 after years of demonstrations, strikes and road blockades.

Abiy, who took over, was determined to reduce the TPLF’s influence.

He speedily returned to repression. Now he has moved to war.

But Tigray has a powerful military, with an estimated 250,000 troops.

The TPLF has used rockets to attack Asmara, capital of

Eritrea. This neighbouring country broke away from Ethiopia in the early 1990s and the TPLF says Eritrea is siding with Abiy.

Some analysts say Ethiopia will become “Africa’s Yugoslavia”, the break-up of a state that will lead to years of violence involving Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Sudan.

Ethnically-based killings have begun.

Stabbed

Amnesty International confirmed last week that “scores, and likely hundreds, of people were stabbed or hacked to death in Mai-Kadra town in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region on 9 November”.

Ethiopia’s ordinary people will not gain from the victory of either side.

They already faced accelerating coronavirus infections, water shortages and the worst locust infestation for 25 years before the fighting began.

Outside powers will seek to gain influence.

The US, China and the Gulf states have all tried to bend Ethiopia to their will in recent years.

They will continue to use the country as a pawn in their greater games.

Just 300 miles east from Ethiopia is Yemen, a terrible warning of the devastation caused by imperialist intervention.

However difficult it may seem, the only hope is a resurgence of protests and a united struggle of workers and the poor—whatever their ethnicity—against the rich.



Ordinary people will not gain from the victory of either side

Tory cronies given fast track to PPE contracts

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

BORIS JOHNSON has boasted he is “proud” of the disastrous way officials supplied PPE protective kit during the pandemic.

This came after a damning investigation by the National Audit Office (NAO) parliamentary watchdog found firms with political connections were ten times more likely to win contracts.

Almost 500 firms with links to “government officials, ministers’ offices, MPs and members of the House of Lords, senior NHS staff and other health professionals” were handed contracts.

Campaign

They included companies connected to senior ministers in the Johnson cabinet and a company that helped the Conservative general election campaign in 2019.

The government gave away around £18 billion of coronavirus-related contracts during the first six months of the coronavirus pandemic.

More than half of those contracts—worth some £10.5 billion—were handed

SUPPLY OF crucial equipment created profits for a few

out without the usual bidding process.

The government set up a “high-priority lane” to “process potential PPE leads” from politicians and state bureaucrats.

The NAO found “one in ten

suppliers processed through the high-priority lane obtained contracts compared to less than one in a hundred suppliers that came through the ordinary lane”.

While fewer than 250 sources for the “leads” were

recorded, the majority came from Tory MPs. Some 144 “came from the private offices of ministers”.

This included “referrals from MPs who had gone to ministers with a possible manufacturer in their

constituency”. And “where private individuals had written to the minister or the private office with offers of help”.

One of the biggest contracts—worth more than £250 million—was awarded to Ayanda Capital Ltd “following a referral by an NHS official”.

At the time Ayanda’s senior adviser was also an adviser to the Board of Trade, an agency run by Tory international trade secretary Liz Truss.

Direct

On top of Tory politicians, some “64 leads were direct from MPs or members of the House of Lords not in government”.

This included state bureaucrats, as “21 leads were from officials, such as a Department of International Trade network that was looking for sources worldwide”.

“The private office of the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health & Social Care”—a senior civil servant—was also in on the game.

And “these leads had been

pre-sifted for credibility by being referred by a senior credible source”.

The problem went beyond contracts for PPE protective kit—and included firms that began work before the official start date of a contract.

The Cabinet Office handed a contract worth up to £1.5 million to Topham Guerin for “publicity campaign coordination” on 7 May.

But, the report found, the company had started on 17 March “without evidence of documented requirements prior to the work beginning”.

Topham Guerin was part of the Tory party’s online strategy during the general election campaign in 2019.

The outsourcing corruption during the pandemic is a symptom of privatisation, which puts millions into the hands of private firms.

The scandal shows there is plenty of money to fund the NHS, social care, other public services and working class people’s needs.

It’s just in the wrong hands—and we should take it out away from the Tories’ rich friends and bosses.

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Tory ‘green revolution’ doesn’t break with fossil fuel economy

Boris Johnson has branched out to offer a ‘green industrial revolution’. Sarah Bates looks at how it falls far short of the radical action we need to tackle climate catastrophe

THE Tories announced plans for a “green industrial revolution” last week to combat climate catastrophe and help kickstart the economy after the pandemic.

Headline promises include banning petrol and diesel cars by 2030 and the creation of 250,000 new jobs.

Boris Johnson claimed the ten-point plan would be “making strides towards net zero by 2050”.

At first glance, it looks promising.

The government is pledging to quadruple offshore wind power, increase spending on insulating homes and support greener energies in the aviation and maritime sectors.

And it’s promised to plant 30,000 hectares of trees every year.

These are all important initiatives, but digging beneath the surface reveals serious flaws in the Tories’ “green revolution”.

The plan includes boosting hydrogen production, a £525 million investment in nuclear power and an extra £200 million for carbon capture initiatives.

Carbon capture technology works by pulling emissions out of the atmosphere. But the technology required to use it on an industrial scale is a fiction.

That hasn’t stopped the Tories handing £200 million to the Net Zero Teesside initiative—a joint initiative by Equinor, Shell, BP, Total and ENI.

It’s a perverse irony that the Tories’ climate change plans see them handing vast amounts of public money to fossil fuel firms.

And hydrogen, which is created from fossil fuels, or nuclear power are not the solution to the climate

emergency. Recent history shows nuclear power is dangerous.

Three reactors at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan had meltdowns following an earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

And it’s set to become even more prone to disaster as climate change is making extreme weather more common and devastating.

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas blasted the plans as “a shopping list, not a plan to address the climate emergency”. “It commits only a fraction of the necessary resources,” she said.

And the government should prioritise public transport, cycling and walking schemes alongside a shift toward electric vehicles.

But the government’s promises amount to simply “promoting” public transport, cycling and walking—with no new schemes announced to support them.

A move away from a fossil fuel-intensive transport system requires investment to make trains and buses free or very cheap.

Reversing cuts to bus services, which have battered the sector particularly in rural areas, would have a huge impact. The Tories’ plans aren’t just insufficient to cope with the climate emergency. They lock in a fossil fuel economy when we desperately need to break from it.

That would mean essentially eliminating the industrial pumping out of carbon emissions, not pouring money into technology that will hopefully capture future fumes.

And it means challenging the logic of a capitalist system where a tiny minority of fossil fuel corporations

get rich while the planet burns.

Fuel sponsors at Cop26

WITH no sense of irony, the British government is using polluting energy firms as its sponsors for the next round of key climate negotiations.

The United Nations’ Cop 26 talks are due to be held in Glasgow next November.

Last week the government announced that SSE, Scottish Power, Natwest and National Grid were the “principal partners who will support the delivery of a successful and ambitious Cop”.

Cop 26 president—Tory business minister Alok Sharma—said the firms “have also shown ambitious climate leadership”.

But the reality is very far from Sharma’s boasting.

High flying rich are to blame

THE responsibility for climate catastrophe isn’t equally disturbed throughout the population—it is the rich that are to blame.

One example is carbon emissions caused by the aviation industry.

Frequent flyers represent just 1 percent of the world’s population but caused half of air travel carbon emissions in 2018, new research has revealed.

The study said these frequent flyers travelled about 35,000 miles a year.

Stefan Gossling from Linnaeus University in Sweden led the study. “A few ‘super emitters’ contribute massively to global warming,” he said.

“The rich have had far too much freedom to design the planet according to their wishes.”

If electric cars are the answer, we’re asking the wrong question

THE government has made waves by bringing forward its pledge to ban all petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030.

While that’s brought the deadline forward by a decade, new research shows it’s still not fast enough.

A report from think tank New Automotive shows that the manufacture and sale of new vehicles until then will be enough to exceed Britain’s carbon emission target. Instead, it argued for a deadline of 2026.

But however fast the

transition, electric cars aren’t the answer.

They are wildly more expensive than fossil fuel cars, despite the government offering £3,000 towards their purchase.

They work by electric motors running on a battery and they do have a carbon price tag. It takes more energy to build a battery car than a fossil fuel one, and the manufacture of tyres is a highly polluting industry.

Johnson promised an extra £1.3 billion investment in electric vehicle infrastructure,

including building more charging points.

Public charging points are owned by different companies, all charging different rates for electricity. To use most of them, you need to be a member of that scheme to access the points.

For others, the quickest and cheapest option is to charge at home. But a lot of people don’t have access to a driveway or on-site parking.

Fundamentally, there needs to be a large-scale move towards public transport, not replacing one type of car with

another. That will mean massive investment in public transport, not pinning our hopes on the car industry moving slowly away from vehicles that guzzle fossil fuels.

The transition to a greener transport shouldn’t be left to the manufacturing bosses. It should be led by public resources and as a matter of urgency.

Grenfell cladding firm was 'dishonest'

by ISABEL RINGROSE

FORMER EMPLOYEES at building cladding firm Celotex have admitted the company "manipulated" test results to compete with market rivals.

Celotex produced the flammable insulation that was used on Grenfell Tower.

Former product manager Jonathan Roper last week gave evidence to the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire.

He said the manipulation of results was "deliberately misleading and dishonest" and said he had been forced to "lie for commercial gain".

Celotex needed to compete with rival Kingspan.

Kingspan controlled the market for insulation on high rise buildings—which is worth £10 million a year.

Celotex rebranded its existing flammable FR5000 insulation product as RS5000. But it needed to pass fire tests before being used on buildings taller than 18 metres.

RS5000 failed its first test. Celotex then added fire-resisting magnesium oxide boards to the test wall to increase its chances of passing a retest.

It also added thicker cladding panels.

Approval

The inquiry heard that this was done in the knowledge and with the approval of Celotex's senior management.

And a member of staff at the private Building Research Establishment testing facility was aware of the changes.

The test report contained no reference to the additional boards. And any reference was removed from marketing material.

Instead it was advertised as "suitable for use" on high rise buildings.

According to Roper, "This was a common practice. All of the management action board were present when the decision was made."

Roper's manager and head of marketing, Paul Evans, denied having knowledge of the decision to add additional fire barriers in the test. Witnesses say otherwise.

Jamie Hayes, former technical services officer for Celotex, was questioned by inquiry barrister Richard Millett QC.

Millett asked, "Was it your view that Celotex was engaged in trying to create a misleading test report?"

"Yes, that's exactly what was happening," Hayes replied.

The inquiry continues.

Optare strikers escalate strikes to win higher pay

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

WORKERS AT bus manufacturer Optare, near Leeds, have upped the ante in the fight for higher pay.

Unite union members at the factory began their second four-day strike on Tuesday of this week.

They escalated their industrial action last week after a series of 48-hour strikes over the last two months.

Unite member Kevin said the "escalation is a response to the complete lack of communication from management and at board level".

"It's clear they don't want to engage in any negotiations," he told Socialist Worker. "We're just the minions at the bottom."

Workers say Optare CEO Graham Belgum made a "broken promise that he wouldn't insult us with a 1 percent pay offer" in August 2019.

Impact

Kevin said workers can see through bosses' attempt to downplay the impact of the strikes. "We saw on the company's Facebook that two buses have come out," he said. "They said the lockdown hasn't affected it."

"But the people who made those buses know they have been stood in there for ten months."

Solidarity from other trade unionists—and a recent legal win over picketing—has boosted workers' determination.

Unite said police officers told strikers "to desist from picketing on



ON THE picket line at Optare last week

PICTURE: JOHN DAVIES

the morning after new coronavirus regulations were introduced".

North Yorkshire Police warned workers that "if they returned they would be issued with penalty notices for breaking lockdown rules".

The High Court was set to hear a judicial review against the chief constable and health secretary earlier this month.

But Unite said the government "conceded that the right to picket should be upheld" before it took place.

Kevin said, "That was a win for the union which made people think, 'That's one up yours'."

He said it's "heartening to see the support coming in" as "obviously a few people are feeling the strain". "We've had over £2,000 put into out fund," he said.

"There's been money from Wakefield and District NEU and Unite Community in York."

"I'm speaking at a Wakefield NEU meeting and going along to the People Before Profit meeting with John McDonnell MP."

Optare workers plan another four-day walkout from Tuesday of next week.

A win at Optare would be a boost for all workers fighting bosses' attempts to drive down pay.

Donate to the strike fund.
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On other pages...
Why talking tough on fat cat pay is not enough >>Page 2

Lively Little Ilford picket

WORKERS AT LITTLE Ilford school in east London began a three-day strike on Tuesday of this week. It follows a two-day walkout last week and a 24-hour strike the week before.

Over 50 NEU union members are fighting the forcible expansion of the school from 1,470 pupils to 1,800.

NEU rep Kate told Socialist Worker that workers "excel" at the level of care they provide.

Complex

"Families of children with complex needs apply from all over the borough and out of the borough to come here," she said.

Pritpal, a maths teacher who works closely with the special educational needs department, added, "Complex Needs is already understaffed. If class

sizes grow, there won't be the help for individuals."

Suresh, a teacher who was a Little Ilford pupil, said, "I came with a very low level of English and got one-to-one support."

"Without that, I wouldn't be a teacher now."

The lack of consultation is a burning issue. Tony asked, "How can the council enforce this without parents' knowledge?"

"It's come so suddenly—that's not right."

There is a lively atmosphere on picket lines and workers are determined. Teacher Besnik summed up the mood, saying, "Little Ilford is my second family."

"We work for each other and for our students. We won't stop fighting until they listen."

Miriam Scharf
Send messages of support to
protectlittleilford@gmail.com

Two-week walkout in Wigan

REHAB WORKERS at the We Are With You (WAWY) charity in Wigan and Leigh began a two-week strike on Wednesday of last week.

Workers were outsourced from the NHS to We Are With You—formerly Addaction.

It provides alcohol and drug rehabilitation services on a contract to the Labour-run council.

Workers have held a series of strikes since August 2019 over bosses' broken promise to keep up with NHS rates of pay.

One striker told Socialist Worker, "We can't give up now—we are in the last six months of the NHS pay award."

"Just because it's a caring profession doesn't mean we should be struggling to get by. The money is there."

"I'm told that I'm not worth just over £30,000 when the top

2 percent of staff are on £60,000 and more.

"They always say it's a 'competitive market' so we have to pay managers that much."

"At the other end we have a race to the bottom, with them saying, 'We'd like to pay more, but we're a charity'. The execs aren't the ones supporting people with alcohol and drug problems."

"The business model creates unfairness—and the only way to change unfairness is to change the business model."

Charity magazine Civil Society Media calculated that Addaction's change of name to WAWY cost around £140,000.

Workers say it would take around £100,000 to include them in the NHS pay deal 2018-2021.

Donate to the strike fund—account number 20244354. Sort code 60 83 01. Unity Trust Bank

ENGINEERING

Rolls-Royce strikers are fighting for jobs

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

WORKERS AT the Rolls-Royce plant in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, are continuing their fight against bosses' plans to slash 350 jobs.

Unite union members at the aeroplane engine factory began a programme of industrial action on 6 November.

Originally due to end on 27 November, workers extended the action until Christmas Eve.

Sections of workers strike on different days across the plant.

And the fight for jobs is winning backing from lots of union branches.

Bosses want to offshore fan blade production to Singapore—a move many workers fear will lead to full-scale closure.

Betrayed

Christian, a Unite member who has worked at the plant for 14 years, says that people were “betrayed and lied to”.

“The company made promises nine or ten years ago when we were sent to train up people in Singapore.

Management said there would be what's called dual sourcing,” he explained.

“Apparently the plan was



PICKETING AT Barnoldswick

PICTURE: UNITE NORTH WEST

that if there was ever a disaster somewhere, you can carry on with production at the other place.

“So we were out there training them up, but now Rolls Royce wants to shut us down.”

Christian said the job losses and possible closure would have a devastating impact on the town.

“There are a lot of people from Barnoldswick who work here and there are a lot of firms in the area that

are aerospace,” he said. “We could machine anything here, but they want to close the actual site.”

He added, “You go down fighting or take it and not do anything about it.”

One local resident added, “Generations of people have put so much into Rolls-Royce and it's been the backbone of the town.

“There's a lot of upset and a lot of ill feeling at the way Rolls have treated Barnoldswick.

“People are worried about the effect it's going to have on the town, especially now we are faced with coronavirus and the lockdowns.”

Supporters of the People Before Profit group held a solidarity day with Barnoldswick strikers on Monday.

Trade unionists, campaigners and socialists should raise solidarity for the Barnoldswick fight across the labour movement.

●Messages of support to ross.quinn@unitetheunion.org

LABOUR PARTY

Open Letter from the SWP

>>>From page 20

certainly needs to fight for Corbyn's full reinstatement. Affiliated unions who backed his leadership should cut off funding to Labour until he is reinstated. But what if, as is seems quite likely, the campaign to defend Corbyn fails?

“Pursuing socialist politics now will mean breaking with the Labour Party. The space that the left used to enjoy within it is disappearing.

“Rather than socialists being squeezed out or silenced, they need to organise independently of a machine that is determined to crush them.

Struggle

“We believe the Labour left should break away and form its own party of struggle.”

It says any new organisation must learn from past experience, particularly the trap of a strategy that gives “priority to achieving electoral success over building and sustaining mass workers' struggles”.

“Similarly, under pressure

to maintain the same “party unity” to which Labour leftists ineffectually appeal today, Corbyn made concession after concession to the right.

“We in the Socialist Workers Party believe that the experience of Corbynism demonstrates the need for a revolutionary socialist alternative to the parliamentary and electoral politics of the Labour Party.

“Through their struggles from below, working people can develop the confidence, organisation, and power to transform society.

“We appeal to Labour Party supporters who have reached the same conclusion to join us.”

The letter hopes to deepen discussion about how to fight Starmer's attacks and about what sort of socialist organisation is necessary after the experience of, for example, Labour in Britain and Syriza in Greece.

●To read the full letter go to socialistworker.co.uk Send us your responses to letters@socialistworker.co.uk

RAIL WORKERS

Scotrail action may spread

GUARDS ON Scotrail are preparing for their first day of strikes over abuse of disciplinary procedures.

The RMT union members at Glasgow Central were due to walk out this Sunday and for the next five Sundays.

They are also refusing to work rest days, overtime and higher grade duties for the duration of the industrial action.

The action comes as 2,500 workers on Scotrail are beginning to be balloted for

strikes and action short of a strike over pay.

The RMT says that workers have been demanding a pay rise.

But bosses claim they can't afford one, and aren't able to offer one until at least January 2021.

Yet they were pushed to offer drivers a rise.

The ballot opened last week and will close on 8 December.

Workers should vote to take action over unfair pay.

ROUND-UP

Justice now for Ricky Reel

CAMPAIGNERS ARE calling for renewed investigations into the death of Ricky Reel.

Ricky died in 1997. He was one of a group who had been racially abused.

The family said that they expected a proper investigation but that they faced “police failures, assumptions and stereotyping based on our colour”.

●Sign the petition at bit.ly/RickyReelJustice

■MEMBERS OF the Unison union have until Friday this week, 27 November, to cast their vote in the general secretary elections.

Socialists in the union are spending the last few days encouraging people to vote for Labour Party member Paul Holmes.

Paul has run his

campaign pledging to be a members' voice at the top of the union. Unison members should post their ballots as soon as possible.

■OUTSOURCED workers at the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Beis) began a strike ballot on Tuesday of this week.

The workers—who are in security, cleaning, portage and postal services at Beis headquarters in central London—say their safety has been put at risk during the pandemic.

Facility workers at Beis pushed bosses into a significant climb down after an all out strike against poverty pay last year.

Now they could strike again as early as next month.

HEATHROW

4,000 set for airport strike

WORKERS AT Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL) are set to strike in a dispute over plans to fire and rehire its 4,000 workers on vastly reduced pay.

The first 24-hour strike is planned for Tuesday 1 December, with a further one-day stoppage on Monday 14 December.

A 48-hour stoppage is scheduled for Thursday 17 and Friday 18 December.

The strike by members of the Unite union would involve firefighters, engineers, campus security, baggage operations, operational and air-side workers, and could close the airport.

HAL workers recorded an 85 percent vote in favour of strikes.

Heathrow bosses have repeatedly boasted that the company has cash reserves to survive for 15 months even if a single plane does not land at the airport. But they want

workers to accept permanent pay cuts of up to £8,000 a year.

Workers are being called to one-to-one meetings over the fire and hire proposals. At the meeting workers are given options to accept the new contract or to leave.

Workers are also being told that if they try to utilise their legal right to sign a new contract under protest it will be classed as a refusal and the worker will lose their job.

Unite regional coordinating officer Wayne King said, “Workers are striking as a direct result of Heathrow airport's brutal proposals to fire and rehire them on greatly reduced wages.

“The airport is using the pandemic as a smokescreen to permanently cut workers' pay.”

There must be no concessions to such an agenda.

The strikes must continue until victory.

DELIVERY DRIVERS

A fightback in Sheffield

DELIVERY WORKERS in the IWGB union planned a strike in Sheffield on Wednesday.

Workers from companies including Deliveroo and Uber Eats are demanding a living wage. They also want an end to unfair sackings.

One Uber Eats worker said, “I received a maternity bonus for completing 50 deliveries within the first eight weeks of giving birth.

“They fired me soon after, saying I had been sharing my account with someone else.

“I never did. I was left with a young baby and no income. Uber Eats doesn't care about us.”

Couriers in Sheffield have already won gains from earlier action. The latest strike is a fight to win more.

●Donate to the couriers' fund at bit.ly/courierfundIWGB

STUDENTS

Rent strikes still strong

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY has been forced to drop threats that rent strikers will have their bursaries docked.

The university was forced to make concessions after a group of students and staff accused it of putting its profits before the lives of the students.

In Manchester hundreds of students are still on rent strike. They are also pushing for it to continue if students return in January.

And students are still occupying the Owen Park tower in Fallowfield.

Students from Cambridge university are also now calling for students to go on rent strike.

The Cambridge university rent strike group is demanding that all colleges commit to a rent reduction and that the university revokes the hiring and promotions freeze.

STARMER STILL ON THE ATTACK

by NICK CLARK

LABOUR PARTY leader Keir Starmer is holding Jeremy Corbyn to ransom as part of an all-out assault on the left in the party.

Left wing former leader Corbyn was reinstated to party membership on Tuesday of last week.

But Starmer says it will be at least three months until he allows Corbyn to sit in parliament as a Labour MP.

And even that depends on whether Corbyn will make further retreats in the face of Starmer's war on the left.

Starmer wants Corbyn to apologise for claiming—correctly—that scale of antisemitism inside the Labour Party had been exaggerated by the right.

Instead, he wants Corbyn to give in to the claim that left wing politics are to blame for antisemitism.

Suspended

Corbyn was suspended from the Labour Party at the end of October.

A report by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said that Labour was guilty of unlawful acts over its handling of accusations of antisemitism.

It was the culmination of a right wing campaign to argue that Corbyn's leadership encouraged widespread antisemitism in Labour.

He was reinstated to Labour after he released a statement "clarifying" his earlier disagreement as part of this.

It was the result of "behind

the scenes" negotiations by Len McCluskey, leader of Labour's largest funder the Unite union.

Corbyn's statement was a retreat. It tacitly gave up on the argument that the accusations levelled at the party were a deliberate attempt by the right to discredit left wing politics.

Instead it said, "The point I wished to make was that the vast majority of Labour Party members were and remain committed anti-racists deeply opposed to antisemitism."

His readmission was granted with a "reminder of values"—effectively a warning not to speak out again.

And some reports say he will only be allowed back as a Labour MP if he admits he is responsible for encouraging antisemitism.

The best way to fight the assault on the left and defend the right to speak out for Palestinians is to sabotage Starmer and leave the Labour Party.

CORBYN IS backing off—but that won't be enough for the Labour right

Lancaster Labour councillors walk out

FIVE councillors in Lancaster quit the Labour Party last week in protest at Keir Starmer's drive to end left wing politics.

The councillors say they will now sit as "eco-socialist independents".

Councillors Faye Penny, Alistair Sinclair, Jack O'Dwyer-Henry and Kevin Frea—then deputy council leader—blasted Starmer's leadership.

Their resignation statement said, "Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has failed to oppose the 'spycops' bill, which threatens human rights, especially those of trade unionists and left wing activists."

Opposition

"Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has failed to provide effective opposition to the government in the pandemic, minimising trade unions' concerns about the unsafe reopening of schools and universities."

"Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has distanced itself from the radical and vitally necessary policies of a socialist Green New Deal."

SWP open letter sets out challenges for Labour

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party has issued an open letter to socialists in the Labour Party.

It sets out the challenge that Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of Labour represented and the assaults from the right in response.

The letter states that Keir Starmer's recent exclusion of Corbyn from the Parliamentary Labour Party is rooted in Corbyn's "record of supporting the Palestinian people in their resistance to oppression".

Starmer also wants "to remove any sense of Labour

being a threat to the rich and powerful" and for the left "to be removed or to be silenced and humiliated".

It adds, "Ever since the general election defeat in December, Corbyn's allies in the Labour Party have been appealing to members to 'stay in and fight'."

"But there has yet to be a real fight against Corbyn's victimisation. Labour left wingers have appealed for party 'unity'."

"Starmer has now shown that he isn't interested in compromise or in unity. "The left

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Labour members marched in north London on Sunday

Meeting called to demand justice for Palestinians

LEFT WING activists—inside and outside the Labour Party—are calling for a defence of Palestinians' rights and resistance to Keir Starmer's assault on the left.

An online rally, set to take place on Friday of this week, says, "It is time to stand with Palestine, to defend free speech on Israel and to defend the left."

Speakers include Palestine Solidarity Campaign director Ben

Jamal, South African freedom fighter Ronnie Kasrils and Labour councillor Leah Levane.

Meeting organisers said, "The suspension of Jeremy Corbyn is the latest episode in a wider campaign to label solidarity with Palestine and the left as antisemitic."

"Criticism of Israel and opposition to Zionism is not antisemitism."

Online rally Fri 27 Nov, 6.30pm. For details go to bit.ly/Palestine27Nov